A LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

BY

W·D·HOWELLS·

HARPER'S BLACK & WHITE SERIES

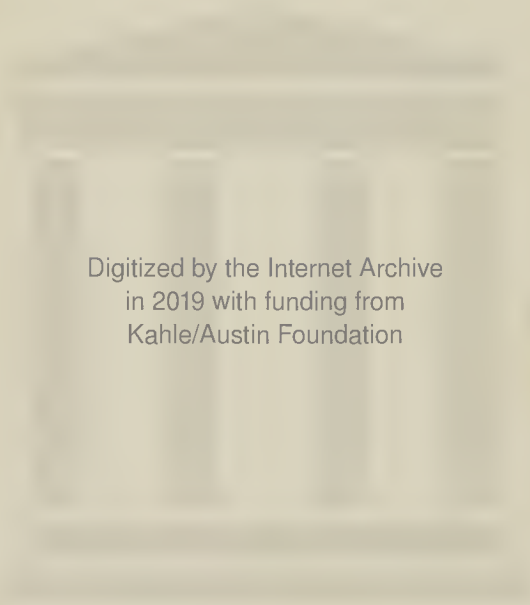
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"EVERYTHING DEPENDS UPON WHAT KIND OF HUMOR HE'S IN." [*See page* 25.

A LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Farce

BY

W. D. HOWELLS

ILLUSTRATED



NEW YORK
HARPER AND BROTHERS
1892

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A LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

FARCE

I

MR. AND MRS. EDWARD ROBERTS

MRS. ROBERTS, looking in upon her husband from the door of the library in their apartment at Hotel Beltingham: "Well, you've got rid of him, Edward."

Roberts: "Yes, at last, thank Heaven!" He continues writing at his table, without looking up, as he answers his wife. "But I thought he never would go, at one time. He isn't a bad kind of fellow, for an Englishman, and if I hadn't been so busy with this paper, I shouldn't have minded his staying. Of course he was nationally English, but personally he was rather nice. Still it was a terrible interruption, just at this moment."

Mrs. Roberts: "Why didn't you hint to him, somehow, to go away?"

Roberts: "Well, I couldn't do that, you know. I really liked him. He was so very amiable."

Mrs. Roberts: "Oh, his being amiable is no excuse. You're amiable yourself, Edward — *too* amiable, if anything. I don't call it amiable to take up almost a full hour of your precious time. I should think any one who came in and saw how busy you were, now, would go away if he had a heart of *stone*. No, I can't believe he was truly amiable; and I must really do something to protect you from these constant interruptions. How do you think I'd better do it?"

Roberts, writing: "Do what?"

Mrs. Roberts, sinking into a chair, and folding her hands in her lap: "Protect you from these interruptions."

Roberts, writing: "Protect *who?*"

Mrs. Roberts: "You, Edward. My heart bleeds for you, to see you so driven with your work, and then people coming in and sitting down, and talking to you, I must *stop* it."

Roberts, writing: "Oh yes. Stop what?"

Mrs. Roberts: "These perfectly killing interruptions. I should think you would go crazy."

Roberts, writing: "Who?"

Mrs. Roberts: "Why you, you poor thing. I think it's worse than cruelty to animals."

Roberts, writing: "Worse than cruelty to animals. Worse— Why, what nonsense is this you've made me write, Agnes?" He looks up at her in a daze. "What *do* you want, Agnes? And *do* state it succinctly, my dear!"

Mrs. Roberts: "Why, I didn't know but you'd asked him to stay to lunch."

Roberts, writing again: "No; I didn't really feel that I could give the time. I should have liked to do so, and I suppose it was rather shabby not to. It was the least he could have expected." He continues writing. "But I've done the next best thing. I've given him a letter of introduction to Uncle Philip, and he will glut him with all kinds of hospitality when he gets to New York."

Mrs. Roberts: "Yes." After a moment. "Do you think it was quite right, Edward?"

Roberts, looking up: "Right? What right?"

Mrs. Roberts: "To put him off on your uncle, if you didn't like him yourself?"

Roberts: "But I *did* like him. I liked him as well as it's possible to like any Englishman on short notice. You have to know an Englishman several days before you're sure you like him; but this one was really very pleasant, and I told Uncle Philip he would probably find him so, unless I was greatly deceived. But now, Agnes, you must really let me go on—"

Mrs. Roberts: "Surely, Edward, you didn't put that into a letter of introduction?"

Roberts, laughing: "That I would have to leave open for him to read? Well, I'm not quite so bad as *that*, Agnes. I wrote a letter to Uncle Philip, to go through the post, and I told him that as soon as he got through the crust of a rather insular manner, and a most un-

accountable enthusiasm for Americans, I'd no doubt he'd find my Englishman charming. You couldn't suppose I'd put all that in a letter of introduction?"

Mrs. Roberts: "Of course not. But you know you *are* so absent-minded, my dear, and I couldn't help being a little afraid—"

Roberts: "Your fears come too late, my dear. The Englishman is gone, and both the letters with him. Now you *must* let me finish this—"

Mrs. Roberts, rising to her feet in amazement. "Both the letters with him?"

Roberts: "Yes; I knew he would pass the letter-box on the corner, and I asked him to drop Uncle Philip's letter in it."

Mrs. Roberts: "Wasn't that rather peculiar, Edward?"

Roberts, with vexation: "Peculiar? No! What was peculiar about it?"

The Voices, in the anteroom, without, of Mr. and Mrs. Willis Campbell:—

He: "In the library? Well, we'll just push right in on them."

She: "And Mrs. Roberts is there too?"

Roberts: "Oh, good heavens! Go

out, Agnes, and stop them! Take them into the parlor a moment, do, till I get this—"

Mrs. Roberts: "You *know* I can't do that, Edward!" To Mrs. Campbell, at the door: "Ah! Come in, Amy! I'm *so* glad to see you." The ladies kiss, and Campbell follows his wife in.

II

MR. AND MRS. CAMPBELL; THE ROBERTSES

Campbell: "And so is Roberts; but he doesn't look it. Hope I don't interrupt you, Roberts, as people say when they know they do."

Roberts, who has pushed away his writing, and risen to greet the intruders with forced gayety: "How do you do, Amy? No; I was just getting to the end of my morning's work, Willis."

Campbell: "Well, it'll do you good to break off before you reach the very tip, then. Keep you from having that tired feeling, you know. What you need is a

little dynamite to blast you out of your chair, here, every morning at half past twelve. If you keep on writing close up to lunch, you'll spoil your digestion."

Roberts: "Well, I sha'n't this morning. I've had an Englishman here for the last hour, and I feel as if I could digest almost anything."

Mrs. Campbell: "Why, it must have been *your* Englishman, then, whom we met at the corner, as we came here! There, Willis! I told you it was an Englishman!"

Campbell: "I couldn't believe it: he was so confoundedly agreeable, and he had so much of that English brogue, when he spoke, that I thought he must be a New Yorker."

Mrs. Roberts: "Why, how came he to talk with you?"

Campbell: "Well, he was hanging round a telegraph pole, trying to post a letter in the fire-alarm box. He said he'd been asked to post it by a gentleman who had told him there was a letter-box at the first corner, and the fire-alarm looked like it. I had to take him by the elbow,

and steer him across the street to the green box on the lamp post. He didn't seem to like the way it opened its mouth at the top like a dying frog, but he risked his letter in it, anyway."

Mrs. Roberts: "There, Edward!"

Campbell: "Hello! Where does Roberts come in?" Mrs. Roberts maintains a reproachful silence, and Campbell turns to Roberts: "Look here, Roberts, what have you been doing? It wasn't *you* who gave that poor young Englishman that letter to post?"

Roberts, trying to put a bold face upon it: "Nonsense! Certainly I did. I had given him a letter of introduction to Uncle Philip—he thinks he may go on to New York to-night, by the boat—and I asked him to post the letter I wrote to advise Uncle Philip of his coming. That's all."

Mrs. Roberts: "Of course it was all right. But it seemed a little odd when Edward first told me."

Campbell: "Did you make your uncle the usual little confidences about the introducee, in your letter of advice?"

Roberts: "I told him I knew he would like him after he had got through his insular manner."

Campbell: "And then you got him to post the letter! Well, it *was* something like seething the kid in its mother's milk, Agnes."

Mrs. Campbell: "What a disgusting idea! Mr. Roberts, don't mind him! He isn't *worth* it. His one idea is to tease."

Roberts: "I see what you mean, Campbell. But of course he couldn't know what was in it, and it seemed very simple and natural to get him to drop it in the box."

Campbell: "It *was* simple, and it was *very* natural. A less absent-minded man's wife might have told him it wasn't exactly delicate, even if the fellow couldn't have known what was in it."

Mrs. Campbell: "And in *you* it *would* have been indelicate; but with Mr. Roberts it's a very different thing."

Campbell: "Oh yes; I know! Absent-mindedness. Well, Roberts, you'll get yourself into an awful mess with your absent-mindedness some day. How do

you know he didn't know what was in the letter to your uncle?"

Roberts, with some seorn: "Why, simply beeause I sealed it before I gave it to him."

Campbell: "And did you seal the letter of introduction?"

Roberts: "Of eourse not!"

Campbell: "Oh, you didn't! Then how do you know that you didn't seal up the letter of introduetion, and give him the letter of adviee to carry with him?"

Roberts: "Because I *know* I didn't."

Campbell: "Oh, *that's* no reason! Now be careful. Would you swear you didn't? Suppose you were on the witness stand!"

Mrs. Campbell: "No, don't suppose it, Mr. Roberts. Don't suppose anything of the kind."

Campbell, without regarding her: "This sort of thing is done every day. People are always getting letters mixed, and shuffling them into the wrong envelopes. Amy did something of the kind herself down at the Shore, last summer and nearly broke off the engagement between

young Welling and Miss Greenway. And if she hadn't been the most sensible kind of a girl, Amy *would* have done it, too. And as it was, I had to do some of the tallest lying this side of the Pacific slope. Perfect *sequoias*—made our place, down there, look like the Yosemite Park, when those fables began to tower up."

Mrs. Campbell, faltering: "It's true, Agnes. I told you about it, you remember."

Mrs. Roberts: "Yes, I know. But that doesn't prove that Edward—"

Campbell: "Oh, doesn't it! If Amy, who has her few wits always about her, could do such a thing, it stands to reason that Roberts, whose multitudinous mind is always off somewhere else when it's wanted, would do it nine times out of ten. Think how absent-minded he is! Remember how he got aboard the sleeping-car that night, and went prying round in all the berths to find you?"

Mrs. Campbell: "Don't be offensive, Willis!"

Campbell: "I'm simply veracious! And then think how he left his watch

in his room, and thought poor old Bemis was a garroter that had taken it from him, and ran after him on the Common, and grabbed Bemis's watch from him, and nearly killed him. And then his going to meet a cook that he'd never seen at the Albany depot, and getting into that scrape with Mrs. McIlheny."

Mrs. Roberts: "That was *my* fault, Willis. I sent him; and I ought to have remembered that he'd never seen the cook."

Campbell: "Oh! And what ought Roberts to have remembered? I tell you, he's put that Englishman's letter of introduction into the sealed envelope, and the letter of advice into the open one, beyond the shadow of a doubt."

Roberts, with rising alarm: "Oh, pshaw! You know you don't think so, Willis."

Campbell: "Think so? I know it! Where was he sitting?"

Roberts: "Where you are now."

Campbell: "In this chair? When you wrote the letters, which did you finish first?"

Roberts: "The letter of introduction, I think."

Campbell: "You think! He can't even remember *that!* Well, can you remember which you *gave* him first?"

Roberts: "No, I can't; but it must have been the letter of introduc—"

Campbell: "Did you put both letters in their envelopes before you gave them to him, or did you hand him first one and then the other?"

Roberts: "I'm sure I can't say! But my impression is—"

Campbell, waving his conjecture scornfully aside: "Agnes, you see how thoroughly mixed up he is."

Mrs. Campbell: "Yes, and you've *mixed* him up. I declare—"

Mrs. Roberts: "Yes, Willis."

Campbell: "Oh, very well, then! If I've mixed him up, I'll let him unmix himself. Then he can't complain. If he didn't blunder with the letters, I suppose my merely *asking* him won't create the fact. I didn't make him do it."

Mrs. Campbell: "And he didn't do it."

Campbell: "He ought to know."

Mrs. Roberts: "And you *do* know, don't you, Edward?"

Roberts: "Why, of course. But anything's possible. And now that Willis has suggested it, why, I can't take my oath—"

Campbell, to the ladies: "You see!"

Roberts: "What — what can I do, Willis? The mere supposition of such a thing—"

Campbell: "Oh, *I* don't know. Go after the Englishman, I suppose, and try to run him down before he reads your letter of advice." He bursts into a loud, unfeeling laugh, while Roberts begins to walk the floor in agitation. "Can you recall any of the expressions you used? Perhaps they weren't so bad."

Roberts, pausing and rubbing his forehead: "I think I can. I told Uncle Phil not to mind his insular manner; that he was necessarily offensive as an Englishman; but that he seemed to have a great many good qualities, and was quite American in some of his feelings and ideas, and had an enthusiasm for us worthy of a better cause. I said I had only

met him once, but I had no doubt he would prove worthy of any kindness that was shown him."

Campbell: "Patronizing and insulting to the last degree! Well, you've done it, Roberts!"

Roberts: "I know—I see! But I didn't mean to be offensive. The fact is, I wrote very hastily; I wanted to get rid of him; my mind was half on my article, here—"

Campbell: "And it was in the same divided condition when you put the letters into their envelopes! What could you expect?"

Roberts: "Look here, Willis! Couldn't *you*—"

Campbell: "Oh, no! This isn't a thing that *I* can interfere in. If it were a case for ground-and-lofty lying, you might call me in; but where it's principally *tact* that's needed, I'd better leave it to you, my dear fellow." He claps Roberts on the shoulder, and breaks down in another laugh.

Mrs. Campbell: "Now look here, Willis! This is perfectly outrageous. You

haven't the slightest proof in the world that Mr. Roberts has mixed the letters, and it's just your wicked teasing that makes you say he has. If you have any feeling at all, you will stop. *I* think it's gone beyond a joke."

Mrs. Roberts: "And I do, too, Amy. Of course I think Edward was wrong to send the man to his uncle just to get rid of him; but that's no reason Willis should torment him so."

Roberts: "No, no! There's only too great reason to suppose he's right. Good heavens! What shall I do about it?"

Campbell: "Well, if I might venture a little suggestion without being denounced as a heartless reprobate—"

Roberts: "I haven't denounced you, Willis!"

Campbell: "My wife and sister have in your interest, and just when I had thought how to help you out."

Mrs. Roberts: "Oh, how, Willis?"

Mrs. Campbell: "Tell it, instantly, Willis!"

Campbell: "You'd better look him up at his hotel, and pretend you thought you

gave the wrong address on the letter to your uncle."

Roberts: "That's all very well, but I don't know where he's stopping."

Campbell: "Well, that does rather cut the ground from under us." A ring at the door is heard. "Ah, there he is now, coming back to have it out with Roberts. He's read that letter of advice, and he wants to know what it means. We must go, Roberts. I'm sorry to leave you in this fix, but—"

III

BELLA; THE CAMPBELLS; THE ROBERTSES

Bella, the maid, coming in with a card for Roberts: "The elevator boy brought it up. The gentleman is waiting below, sir."

Roberts, glancing at the card: "Merciful powers! Willis is right! It is the man himself!"

Mrs. Roberts: "Oh, Edward, what do you suppose he wants? But don't be alarmed, dearest! *I* don't agree with

Willis in his pessimistic views. I know you can easily explain it."

Campbell: "Oh, *can* he? Well, I think I'll just wait, then, and hear his explanation."

Mrs. Campbell: "Willis! You must advise him what to do. You must invent some plan."

Campbell: "*Thank* you! I don't deny that I'm pretty ingenious, and all that; but what you want here is the invention of a Thomas A. Edison. Nothing short of it will ever get Roberts out of *this* scrape."

Roberts, trying to pluck up courage: "But I deny that there *is* any scrape. The whole affair is purely hypothetical. There's nothing in the world to prove that I've mixed up the letters, and I deny that I did. The man has simply come back because he's forgotten something, or wishes to make some little inquiry, or—"

Campbell: "Then why don't you have him up at once, instead of letting him cool his heels down there in your front hall? Have him up! It's uncivil to keep him waiting."

Mrs. Roberts: "No, no." To the maid: "Stop, Bella! No, Willis; we must provide for contingencies. I think Edward is perfectly right, and I know he didn't mix the letters up; but oughtn't we to guard against any chances, Willis?"

Campbell: "I should say you ought. And you'd better ring for a policeman to do it. He's an awfully athletic-looking fellow. Those Englishmen often are."

Mrs. Roberts: "Then, Bella, you must tell the boy to say that Mr. Roberts has just gone out; and that Mrs. Roberts is very sorry—"

Roberts: "No, Agnes, that won't do, my dear. I can't allow that. If I've done this thing, I must face the consequences."

Mrs. Roberts: "Yes, that's what I say. We must provide for contingencies."

Campbell: "He may want to fight you, Roberts, like McIlheny, you know, when you asked his wife whether she was a cook."

Mrs. Campbell: "Everything depends upon what kind of humor he's in, of course."

Mrs. Roberts: "Of course. If he's very—boisterous, you mustn't have anything to say to him; but if he's pleasant, or if he's merely cold, or hurt, in his manner, why, I suppose you must ask him to lunch. And Willis and Amy can stay, and help make it go off."

Campbell: "Oh, thank you, Agnes! The Roberts family seems to have a gift for patronizing offensiveness; I don't mind it myself, but if I was an Englishman that Roberts had told to his face that he was nationally detestable—"

Roberts: "Told to his face?"

Campbell: "It's the same thing—it would take a good deal more than lunch to pacify *me*. I should want *dinner*, and not merely a *family* dinner, a snap-shot, accidental thing, but a regular formal affair, with the best people asked, and the chance of other invitations. The least *you* can do, Roberts, is to send for this Englishman's baggage, and make him stay a fortnight with you."

Mrs. Roberts: "I *had* thought of that, Willis."

Campbell: "You *said—lunch*."

Mrs. Roberts: "But our flat is so small, and the children are in the guest-chamber—"

Campbell: "And in the mean time, the Englishman is waiting below in the select society of the janitor."

Mrs. Roberts: "Oh, my goodness, I forgot all about him!"

Roberts: "Yes. We *must* have him up at once, and then act accordingly."

Campbell: "Oh yes; you mustn't give yourself away. If you don't *happen* to have mixed the letters up, you don't want to begin apologizing. You will have to judge from his manner."

Roberts: "But he was so extremely flattering, so very enthusiastic about us, I'm afraid we can't tell from his manner."

Campbell: "You must draw him out, specifically. Did you ask him how he liked America?"

Roberts: "No; I was ashamed to ask him when he told me he had just arrived this morning."

Campbell: "Well, then, Amy can ask him. She isn't ashamed to ask anything.

And if he begins to abuse us, up hill and down dale—"

Mrs. Campbell: "He had better *not* abuse us! I shouldn't allow it."

Mrs. Roberts: "Oh yes, Amy; bear anything! We *must* try to pacify him somehow."

Campbell: "And Roberts had better go out, and meet him in that anteroom of yours—it's as *dark* as a pocket—and make him take off his overcoat—he mustn't allow any refusal—and then kind of linger behind him a moment after you've received him at the door here, and search his overcoat pockets. Very probably he's put the letter into one of them."

Mrs. Roberts: "Do you think that would be very nice, Willis?"

Campbell: "Well, I don't know: about as nice as having Amy truckle to his abuse of the country."

Mrs. Campbell: "It isn't at all the same thing."

Campbell: "It's exactly the same thing." A ring at the door summons Bella away. "He's getting impatient.

Well, I shouldn't like to be kept waiting so long myself."

Bella, returning: "It's the gentleman below, ma'am. The boy says he'd like to know if you got his card."

Campbell: "I thought so. You must let him come up, or you must send word that you're not at home. You can't prolong the suspense indefinitely."

Mrs. Campbell: "No, Agnes, you can't, really!"

Roberts: "We must decide, my dear!"

Mrs. Roberts, desperately: "Well, then, tell the janitor to send him up, Bella!" As Bella goes: "And we haven't thought at all how we shall act!"

Campbell: "Well, I know *one* thing: if Roberts lets his knees knock together, *so as to be heard*, I won't stand it. I'll leave the house. It'll be *too* disgraceful. Courage, Roberts! I wouldn't miss seeing how you'll carry this thing off for any money! I know you're a perfect moral hero on all ordinary occasions, but in a predicament like this I don't envy you. And the worst of it is, that if the fellow's a gentleman—and he looked like one, in

the English way—you won't be able to judge from his acts how he feels! You'll have to grope your way in the dark, and—There he is!" A ring is heard. "Now let's all look unconcerned, as if we were not expecting any one. Amy, you be turning over those photographic views of the White Mountains, in your pretty, careless way. Agnes, you be examining some object with the microscope. Here, Roberts, you sit down to your writing again. And I'll be tuning up the family phonograph. That'll give him an idea of a cultivated Boston family, at home with itself, and at peace with the whole *human* family. And we must all be extremely deferential and—complimentary—so's to take the bad taste of Roberts's letter out of his mouth." Campbell delivers these instructions in a rapid whisper. As Bella opens the door to admit the stranger to the anteroom, he continues in a loud, didactic voice: "As you very justly observed, in our present uncertainty as to whether the peculiar parallel markings of the planet Mars are marine canals, or merely magic-lantern



"THERE HE IS!"

displays of the Martians to attract the attention of the telescope man on Boston Common—"

Bella, announcing the Englishman at the library door: "Mr. Westgate."

IV

MR. WESTGATE; THE CAMPBELLS; THE ROBERTSES

Westgate, to Roberts: "Ah, I beg your pardon! It's really very ridiculous, and I'm quite ashamed to trouble you again, Mr. Roberts. Your letter—"

Roberts, coming eagerly forward: "Oh, I'm so glad to see you again, Mr. Westgate. You're just in time for lunch; and I hope you can sit down with us. Mrs. Roberts, Mr. Westgate. My wife hadn't the pleasure of—ah—meeting you before, I think. Let me take your overcoat. You'll find it very hot in our American houses, I'm afraid."

Westgate: "Oh, not at all! I'm sure I shall like it. I should *so* like to see one of your furnaces! But I only came back

a moment to show you a little mistake—if it *is* a mistake—"

Mrs. Roberts, eagerly: "I'm so sorry we've only steam heat, and can't show you a furnace; but you'll find it quite hot; and you *must* take off your coat."

Westgate: "Why, you're very good, I'm sure. But only for a moment."

Roberts: "Allow me!" He possesses himself of Westgate's hat and coat, and rushes out into the anteroom with them.

Mrs. Roberts: "Let me introduce you to my sister, Mrs. Campbell; and my brother, Mr. Campbell, Mr. Westgate." Westgate bows to the lady, and then shakes hands with Campbell.

Westgate: "Ah! how do you do? I'd no idea—I'm very glad to meet you, I'm sure. I don't know what I should have done with the letter Mr. Roberts intrusted to me—"

Campbell: "Oh, that was nothing. I saw that you were on the point of doing something desperate, and I just stepped in. There's nothing I like better than saving human life; and as I've often tried to post my wife's letters in the fire-

alarm box, at two o'clock in the morning, and never succeeded yet, I had a fellow-feeling for you."

Westgate: "H'm! Yes! You see your post-boxes are so very different to ours—"

Mrs. Campbell: "Oh, your London post-boxes are simply delightful! They're just *like* posts—fat ones; and they take in whole packages. But—I hope you *like* America, Mr. Westgate!"

Mrs. Roberts: "Yes, we are always so glad when your countrymen—"

Campbell: "We aim to please."

Westgate: "Well, I can't say I like your post-boxes exactly."

Mrs. Campbell: "Oh, neither do we!"

Westgate: "And I'd always heard you had clear winter weather. I've never seen it more overcast at home."

Mrs. Roberts: "That is true. It's going to snow, I think. I'm afraid you won't like our snow!"

Campbell: "Well, perhaps, we might have some with the chill off."

Westgate, regarding him fixedly for a moment: "Ow! Ah! I see! Very good! Ah, ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha! And—ha,

ha, ha! Ah, ha, ha!—you meant, *coming home from the club!* I hadn't understood your American humor, at first. I fancy there's no hope of any good Samaritan to show you to the post-box at two o'clock in the morning hour! Ah, ha, ha!"

Mrs. Roberts: "I've been scolding my husband for troubling you with that letter, Mr. Westgate!"

Westgate: "No, really? But I always heard the American ladies were so amiable, you know."

Mrs. Campbell: "Oh, we *are*, Mr. Westgate! But we have to maintain discipline in the family, you know."

Westgate: "Of course. But"—to Campbell—"what did you mean exactly, by having snow with the chill off? Such a delightful expression."

Campbell: "Well, I don't know. Some sort of joke, I suppose."

Westgate: "I was sure you did! Ah, ha, ha! Your countrymen are so delightfully humorous—so funny, you know. You know we think you're *such* fun."

Campbell: "Do you think so? I don't



"I ALWAYS HEARD THE AMERICAN LADIES WERE SO AMIABLE."

think we're half so funny as Englishmen."

Mrs. Campbell: "We think you're *twice* as funny as we are, Mr. Westgate."

Westgate: "Ow, but really, now!"

Mrs. Campbell: "I don't know how we should have done without your Mr. Gilbert."

Westgate: "But isn't he rather exaggerated? I *much* prefer your Joshua Billings. And your after-dinner speakers! Mr. Depew, for instance!"

Mrs. Roberts: "But the Prince of Wales, you know."

Westgate: "Ow! Do you regard him as a humorist? He says some neat things, occasionally. But your California humor, now: we've nothing like *that*, you know!"

Mrs. Campbell: "I'm afraid you will make my husband intolerably conceited."

Westgate: "Really? Is Mr. — ah — Campbell a Californian? How very delightful! And is that peculiar dialect used by your California writers spoken in the cities? I should so much like to

hear it. I don't think we ever quite get the right accent in reading it."

Campbell: "You'd hear it everywhere in California. I'm a little out of practice now, myself; I speak Bostonese, at present; but I recollect very well how the ladies in San Francisco used to say, 'Well, I got the dead wood onto you, that time,' and 'How're you makin' it, pard?' and 'You bet,' and 'You git!' You mean that sort of thing?"

Westgate: "Exactly. How delightful! So very picturesque, you know. So imaginative!"

Campbell: "Yes, I suppose there's more imagination to the acre in California than you'll find anywhere else in the United States."

Mrs. Campbell: "And more modesty, Mr. Westgate; more unconscious merit."

Campbell: "Well, I shouldn't like to boast before a foreigner. There's Chicago. And for a real, unadulterated diffidence, a shrinking, deprecatory little misgiving as to the existence of the outside universe, I think Mr. Westgate will

find that Boston takes the cake. In California people don't *know* they're modest, but in Boston they *do*. That's the difference."

Mrs. Roberts: "I hope Mr. Westgate will stay with us long enough to find out that everything you say is a wicked slander, Willis. Why must you rush off to New York at once, Mr. Westgate?"

Westgate: "You're very good, I'm sure. But I'm afraid— Ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha!" To Campbell: "That was a very amusing expression of yours! Imagination to the acre! As if it were some kind of crop! Very good! Capital! Ah, ha, ha! And would you be kind enough to explain that expression, 'take the cake?'"

Campbell: "Oh, it comes from the cake walk, you know."

Westgate: "Ow!"

Campbell: "Yes. Where the darkies try to see which can put on the most style in a kind of walk-round, and there's a cake up for a prize, and the greatest swell takes it."

Westgate: "How very amusing!"

Campbell: "Amusing? It's more fun than a goat!"

Mrs. Campbell: "Willis!"

Westgate: "Oh, but really! *Don't* stop him! It's quite what I came to America for — those delightful expressions! I don't know why you're all so shy of using them when you come over! We get them in print, but we seldom hear them."

Campbell: "You should go to a ladies' lunch here! You wouldn't hear anything else."

Westgate: "Ow! And just what is a ladies' lunch?"

Campbell: "It's the social entertainment of the future. The race is running to girls so, in Massachusetts, that they've got to having these lunches without asking men, so as to see how it will feel when there are no men to ask. Often it's merely a hen feed, where they would like to have men if they could get them; just as a stag dinner is a good time that women would like to come to if they could. Sometimes it's a virtue, sometimes it's a necessity. But it's always a joke."

Mrs. Roberts: "You mustn't believe him, Mr. Westgate. He's never been at a ladies' lunch, and he doesn't know how charming they are."

Westgate: "Yes, I understand gentlemen are not asked. But—ah, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha!—that was a very droll expression of Mr. Campbell's about a goat. More—more amusing than a goat, I think it was. Will you ladies kindly tell me why a goat should be considered so very amusing? You see I'm beginning to be afraid I can't trust Mr. Campbell."

Mrs. Roberts: "I'm afraid you must, in this case. I'm sure we don't know why a goat should be more entertaining than any other animal."

Westgate: "Ow! Then you're not *all* humorists, over here? We get that idea, you know. We think you're such *jokers*. But really, you know, I think that some people who do that kind of thing, you know, and have Americans a great deal, don't see the point of their jokes at all times; or not *at once*. Your humor is so different to ours, you know. I've often had the meaning of an American joke

occur to me some time after, you know, when I've had leisure to think it out. Still, it *is* very amusing."

Mrs. Campbell: "But *we* think the English humor so refined — so high-bred."

Mrs. Roberts: "Oh yes! Your jokes bear the stamp of such an old civilization, my husband says."

Campbell: "So polished with use."

Westgate: "Ah, well! I don't know about that, you know. There may be something in it. But I'm inclined to think — Ah, ha, ha, ha! Very good! Excellent! I didn't catch your meaning, at first. *Used so often!* I see! Ha, ha, ha! You ought to come over to us, Mr. Campbell. We've a great many charming Americans; but most of them are quite like ourselves."

Campbell: "Is it so bad as that?"

Westgate: "Yes; it's really quite vexing, you know. So very tiresome."

Mrs. Roberts: "I hope Mr. Westgate will stay with us long enough to see that we've something besides humor—in Boston, at least. You must let us send to



"THAT WAS A VERY DROLL EXPRESSION OF MR. CAMPBELL'S ABOUT A GOAT."

the hotel for your trunk—boxes, I *should* say."

Westgate: "Ow no! Ow no! I *much* prefer *trunk*."

Mrs. Campbell: "And *we* prefer *boxes*."

Westgate: "No, really?"

Mrs. Roberts: "You must be our guest long enough at least to see something of Boston. Mr. Roberts will take you to the Art Club Exhibition."

Westgate: "You're really very good. But I'd really no idea— I only came back a moment on account of a little mistake I think Mr. Roberts made in the let—"

Mrs. Roberts, hastily: "We think Boston is quite an art centre, now. Amy, I want Mr. Westgate to see the little Monet in the p— drawing-room."

Westgate: "Oh, *do* say parlor! I think it's so much nicer. And without the *u*, please."

Mrs. Campbell: "I see you're determined to be pleased with everything American, Mr. Westgate, and I'm sure you'll like this Monet."

Westgate: "But I beg your pardon! Isn't he French?"

Campbell: "All the American pictures we buy are by Frenchmen."

Mrs. Campbell: "But *we* much prefer English pictures, Mr. Westgate. You have so much more technique than the French, so much more *school*. I adore Tadema, myself."

Westgate: "But—yes—ah—I think he's Dutch, though?"

Mrs. Campbell: "Well, as Mr. Campbell was saying, *our* paintings are all by Frenchmen—all that we buy. If you will come with me, Mr. Westgate—"

V

MRS. ROBERTS; CAMPBELL

Mrs. Roberts: "What in the world has happened to Edward?"

Campbell: "He can't have been searching the man's coat-pockets all this time. Perhaps he's cut open the lining. Or he's found the wrong letter, and has gone off and hid somewhere." Roberts shows himself at the door. "No; there he is now. I didn't know but he'd committed

suicide. Well, Roberts! Come in, old fellow! The coast is clear, for the moment!" Roberts advances spectrally into the room. "What's the matter?"

VI

ROBERTS; MRS. ROBERTS; CAMPBELL

They all speak throughout the scene in hoarse whispers, and from time to time the voices of Mrs. Campbell and Mr. Westgate penetrate to them from the drawing-room.

Roberts: "Is he gone?"

Mrs. Roberts: "'Sh! No. He's in the parlor, with Amy. She's showing him the pictures. He couldn't go without his hat and overcoat, you know."

Roberts: "Yes. I didn't think of that."

Campbell: "'Sh! Have you been through his clothes? 'Sh!"

Roberts: "No; I hadn't the courage."

Campbell: "'Sh! Then where *have* you been? 'Sh!"

Roberts: "Sitting out there in the anteroom."

Mrs. Roberts: "Oh, poor Edward! 'Sh! Did you listen? He still seems very amiable. 'Sh! I don't think he's angry about anything. I don't believe you've made any serious mistake."

Campbell: "Unless he's — 'sh! — dissembling. They're awfully double-faced fellows, Englishmen are. 'Sh! I think he's dissembling. 'Sh!"

Mrs. Roberts: "'Sh! Nonsense, Willis! He says you made some mistake with the letter; but—"

Campbell: "'Sh! Of course you mixed them! He's just lying low. You'd better keep out of his way, Roberts. 'Sh!"

Westgate, without: "Then I suppose you've quite a large school of resident artists in Boston?"

Mrs. Campbell, without: "Well, no. But we've a very large school of *non*-resident Boston artists. Our painters all have to go to New York to get a living."

Westgate, without: "Ow! Then I suppose New York is the artistic centre of your country?"

Mrs. Campbell, without: "Not at all. We have the critics here."

Westgate, without: "Then you consider criticism more essential than painting in an artistic centre?"

Campbell: "'Sh! He's getting sarcastic. He's tuning up for you, Roberts. He's tearing off the mask of amiability. Better get out into the anteroom again, Roberts. Agnes can say you were too sick to come to lunch, and we can carry it off somehow. Oh, but—hello! She's asked him to let her send for his boxes—such a delightful expression!—and come and stay with you. I think you'd better be suddenly called out of town. There's no other way for it!"

Roberts, with a tremendous effort of moral heroism: "No; I must stay and face it out. It would be cowardly to shirk it."

Mrs. Roberts: "Oh, Edward, what courage you *do* have! But what will you say to him? Willis, *can't* you think of something for Edward to say? You know he's never good on the spur of the moment, and you *are*. 'Sh!"

Campbell: "'Sh! Don't say anything at all, till he opens up. But keep treating him beautifully, and then he'll see that Roberts *couldn't* have meant anything by those insulting and patronizing expressions. He'll think it's just our Yankee awkwardness and vulgarity."

Mrs. Roberts, willingly accepting the suggestion: "Yes, just our Yankee awkwardness and vulgarity. I know he'll excuse it, Edward. You mustn't be alarmed. Remember how much *real* courage you always have!"

Roberts: "I can't let him excuse it on that ground. No; I must grapple with it frankly."

Campbell: "All right! Only let him grapple first. Don't give yourself away."

Mrs. Roberts: "'Sh! They're coming back. 'Sh!"

Campbell: "'Sh! Now, Roberts, brace up. 'Sh! Be a man! Be an American! And deny everything!"

VII

THE ROBERTSES; CAMPBELL; MRS. CAMPBELL with WESTGATE

Westgate: "Your Monet is beautiful, Mrs. Roberts. You know, I think you Americans are so much more open-minded than we are, and you take up with the new things so much sooner. I don't think the impressionists are to the fore with us yet."

Mrs. Roberts: "Oh, but I can't allow you to say anything against England, Mr. Westgate!"

Mrs. Campbell: "No, indeed; you would find no sympathizers in that, Mr. Westgate."

Campbell: "We gamble on the mother-country every time, here in Boston, at least, and in New York you'll feel as if you'd just got back to London."

Westgate: "Well, you know, I should

be rather sorry to do that. I came over to see Americans."

Campbell: "Well, you're barking up the wrong tree."

Westgate: "Barking up— What a delightful expression! Would you mind saying— Ah, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha! Very good! I see! You mean in stripping the bark off for the birch canoes, I suppose. These figurative phrases are so vigorous. And you have so many of them. I've heard Americans use some of them at home. Do you suppose that expression originated with your Indians, perhaps?"

Campbell: "No; they originated the expression, Good Indians, dead Indians. But if you have a fancy for these expressions, Roberts, here, can fill you up with a lot of them."

Roberts: "Yes—that is—I do hope you can spend a few days with us before you push on to New York."

Westgate: "Why, you're very good, I'm sure. But that reminds me of the letter of introduc—"

Campbell: "You stay on here, and

Roberts will paint the town red for you."

Mrs. Roberts: "You must allow us to send for your boxes."

Mrs. Campbell: "Your luggage—yes."

Westgate: "Ow, but I'd so much rather you'd say *baggage!* I've had it sent to the railway—"

Mrs. Roberts: "Station? That doesn't the least matter."

Westgate: "Ow, but it does! I'd *so* much rather say *deepo*, as you do."

Roberts: "We can get it perfectly well, if you'll give us your transfer—"

Campbell: "Don't say *checks*, Roberts! There must be some *English* word!"

Westgate: "No, really; I must go on to New York. My plans are all made. But on my return from the West I shall be most happy to remember your kindness. I've only ventured to trouble Mr. Roberts in regard to the mistake he seems to have made with—"

Roberts: "I beg you won't suppose—"

Mrs. Roberts, at the same time: "You mustn't regard it, indeed, Mr. Westgate!"

Mrs. Campbell, at the same time: "Mr. Roberts is *so* absent-minded!"

Campbell, at the same time: "Roberts is *all* absence of mind!"

Westgate: "Ha, ha, ha! But you know— Ah, ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha! I see! Capital! Oh, excellent. *English* word for checks! Excellent. Ah— would you be good enough to say just what you mean by painting a place red?"

Campbell: "Roberts will show you, if you'll only stay!"

Westgate: "It's quite impossible, now, at all events." To Roberts: "But the letter you kindly gave me to your uncle—"

Roberts: "Yes—yes—"

Mrs. Roberts: "You'll like Uncle Philip *so* much! And he'll appreciate the favor Edward's done him in sending—"

Mrs. Campbell, at the same time: "He's so fond of the English!"

Campbell, at the same time: "And he's right on to Roberts's jokes. They're always at it together. Back and forth, all the time. If Roberts has put up any little job, Uncle Phil will catch on like lightning."

Westgate: "Oh, what extremely delightful expressions! I'm sure I sha'n't remember the half of them! But this letter—do you really think—" He takes it from his pocket.

Roberts: "Yes—yes. I'm quite certain he'll—"

Mrs. Roberts, at the same time: "Oh yes, indeed! My husband was with him so much at one time! They're almost of the same age."

Westgate: "Oh, indeed! I fancied an old gentleman! Then you think that he'll understand—"

Mrs. Campbell: "Uncle Philip understands Mr. Roberts and all his ways perfectly. They have such fun when they're together."

Mrs. Roberts, at the same time: "It doesn't matter what Edward has written, he'll take it just in the right way."

Campbell, at the same time: "Yes, he'll know it's *some* kind of a joke."

Westgate: "Well, you know, I thought perhaps, myself, it was one of your pieces of American humor."

Mrs. Roberts: "Oh, it *was*, Mr. West-

gate, I assure you it was! Just one of our pieces of American humor—"

Mrs. Campbell: "Yes, indeed; you can depend upon that, Mr. Westgate!"

Westgate: "Ah well! If it had been Mr. Campbell, here, I should have felt sure of it. But I couldn't be quite so certain that Mr. Roberts—"

Campbell: "Oh, when it comes to joking, Americans are all alike. Roberts is a little more alike than the rest of us; that's all. So's Uncle Philip, for that matter. He'd take it right even if Roberts hadn't written anything at all."

Westgate: "But that's just what Mr. Roberts has done!"

All the others: "What!"

Westgate, handing the envelope to Roberts, who finds it empty, and passes it to his wife, who in turn hands it silently to Mrs. Campbell: "Of course I wished to read the kind things you'd said of me, as soon as possible, and I was greatly surprised to find no letter in this envelope. I wasn't sure whether you intended me simply to present the envelope to your uncle, or whether— At all

events, I decided I'd better come and ask."

Campbell, who has possessed himself of the envelope: "Why, look here, Roberts! You put both letters in that sealed envelope I kept Mr. Westgate from posting in the fire-alarm box."

Roberts: "Why, so I must! Really, Mr. Westgate, I don't know what to say!"

Mrs. Roberts: "Yes, Edward, I don't know what you *will* say!"

Campbell: "Roberts, you're incorrigible! When *will* you give up this habit of practical joking? Really, old fellow, you ought to stop it. You and Uncle Phil have kept it up long enough. And *I* think you owe Mr. Westgate an apology. The joke's on Uncle Phil, of course; but you ought to see that it's rather embarrassing to Mr. Westgate to find himself the bearer of an empty envelope instead of a letter of introduction. Come, now, *you must explain;* and we'll all apologize for you." Roberts waits with a foolish face of deprecation, turning to horror, at the suggestion of an explana-

tion. "Come! You owe it to yourself, as a joker."

Westgate, amiably: "Ow, now! Not at all. *No* apologies. I shouldn't be able to forgive myself if I couldn't allow a man his joke. But I *should* like an explanation, you know. Your humor is so *very* different to ours, and I don't believe any one at home, if I said you had given me an empty envelope to carry to your uncle, *could* feel the spirit of it. And these things are so tiresome, you know, when they happen to fall flat. I hope you won't think me importunate if I say I should like to know just where the laugh comes in on a thing of that kind?"

Campbell: "Out with it, Roberts!"

Mrs. Roberts: "Don't you think— Oh, I'm sure you'll spoil it, Edward!"

Mrs. Campbell: "Don't you think you'd better leave it to Uncle Philip?"

Campbell: "Well, that's an inspiration, Amy. Leave it to Uncle Phil, Roberts!"

Roberts, with a deep sigh of relief: "Yes, that will be best. My Uncle Philip will tell you, if you don't mind."

Bella, at the door: "Lunch is served, Mrs. Roberts."

Mrs. Roberts, gayly: "I'm going to lead the way, with Mr. Westgate. Edward, bring Amy. And, Willis, you can—"

Campbell: "Oh, come, now! None of your little unconscious jokes, Agnes! I won't stand it from my own sister."

Westgate: "Ow! Do the American ladies often make jokes without knowing it, Mrs. Roberts?" To Campbell: "But what is just the point of— Ow, I see! Very good! Ha, ha, ha! And shall we have some distinctively American dishes, Mrs. Roberts? You know I'm so very, very curious about your chowder, and doughnuts, and maple syrup, and buckwheat cakes, and corn-dodgers, and hoe-downs. Such delightful names. They really make one's mouth water." He goes out with Mrs. Roberts.

Campbell, lingering, and detaining his wife and Roberts: "Roberts, can't you dance a hoe-cake for him? You ought to do it on your knees, you miserable sinner!"

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